

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8803

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: SNAR VE

SUBJ: GOV REFUSES TO PERMIT DEA TO INCREASE ITS PERSONNEL

ASSIGNED TO VENEZUELA

BEGIN SUMMARY: FOLLOWING SEVERAL MONTHS EFFORT WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO OBTAIN AN INCREASE IN THE DEA PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO VENEZUELA, WE HAVE BEEN INFORMALLY BUT OFFICIALLY INFORMED THAT THE GOV IS UNWILLING TO AGREE TO OUR REQUEST FOR THE INCREASE IN DEA PERSONNEL. WHILE THE GOV'S REASONS FOR THIS DECISION ARE NOT CLEAR, WE BELIEVE THE DECISION IS FIRM AND THAT IT WOULD BE USELESS TO PRESS THE GOV FURTHER ON IT FOR SOME TIME TO COME. END SUMMARY

1. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST, POL COUNSELOR MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY (AMB DIAZ GONZALEZ) ON JULY 2 FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASCERTAINING WHETHER OR NOT THE GOV WAS PREPARED TO PERMIT AN INCREASE IN THE DEA PERSONNEL CURRENTLY ASSIGNED TO VENEZUEAL. POL COUNSELOR REVIEWED THE BACKGROUND OF THE LIMITATION IMPOSED BY THE GOV ON DEA PERSONNEL IN VENEZUELA, EXPLAINED THE DEA REGIONAL AND DISTRICT OFFICES' URGENT NEED TO INCREASE THEIR TOTAL COMBINED STRENGTH FROM THE PRESENT FIFTEEN EMPLOYEES TO TWENTY-SIX, AND REMINDED DIAZ GONZALEZ THAT THE EMBASSY'S DCM HAD ALSO RECENTLY RAISED THE MATTER WITH HIM.

2. DIAZ GONZALEZ REPLIED THAT THE FONMINISTRY DOES NOT ACT UNILATERALLY IN SUCH MATTERS BUT CONSULTS WITH THE OTHER INTERESTED GOV AGENCIES. HE SAID THAT FOLLOWING THE DCM'S MENTION OF THE MATTER TO HIM HE HAD CONVENED IN HIS OFFICE A MEETING WITH THE
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VICE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, THE DIRECTOR OF THE PTJ, AND A

REPRESENTATIVE OF DISIP. DIAZ GONZALEZ SAID THESE OFFICIALS HAD ALL RECOMMENDED AGAINST PERMITTING DEA TO INCREASE ITS PERSONNEL IN VENEZUELA. POL COUNSELOR EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT THIS RECOMMENDATION,

SINCE HE HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT THE VENEZUELAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES IN FACT SUPPORTED DEA'S REQUEST FOR AN INCREASE IN PERSONNEL. DIAZ GONZALEZ PROMISED TO CONSULT AGAIN WITH THE VICE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, THE PTJ AND DISIP.

3. SUBSEQUENTLY, POL COUNSELOR INFORMALLY MENTIONED THIS MATTER WITH DIAZ GONZALEZ, WHO TOLD HIM HE WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY REACHING THE VARIOUS OFFICIALS BECAUSE OF SUMMER VACATIONS. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S SUGGESTION THE POL COUNSELOR DID NOT AFTERWARDS PRESS DIAZ GONZALEZ FOR A REPLY.

4. AT A LARGE OFFICIAL RECEPTION THIS WEEK DIAZ GONZALEZ RAISED THE SUBJECT OF THE DEA INCREASE WITH THE POL COUNSELOR. DIAZ GONZALEZ STATED THAT HE HAD CONSULTED WITH THE GOV AGENCIES AS HE HAD PROMISED, AND THAT THE GOV STILL DOES NOT WISH AN INCREASE IN THE DEA PERSONNEL IN VENEZUELA. DIAZ GONZALEZ SAID HE WAS CONVEYING THE GOV'S OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST. POL COUNSELOR RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION FROM DIAZ GONZALEZ THAT THE GOV DECISION WAS FIRM, AND THAT THE GOV WOULD NOT WELCOME OUR RAISING THE MATTER AGAIN SOON.

5. COMMENT: THE REASONS FOR THE GOV'S DENIAL OF DEA'S REQUEST ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR. ON JULY 2 DIAZ GONZALEZ SPOKE VAGUELY ABOUT AN INCREASE IN DEA PERSONNEL COMPLICATING ALREADY-EXISTING PROBLEMS IN VENEZUELAN INTER-AGENCY ANTI-DRUG COORDINATION, AND HE COMPLAINED THAT DEA DOES NOT COMBAT THE IMPORTATION OF DRUGS, ESPECIALLY FROM THE US, INTO VENEZUELA. HOWEVER, NEITHER THE EMBASSY NOR DEA HAS EVER RECEIVED ANY SUCH COMPLAINTS FROM THE GOV ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES. ON THE CONTRARY, THEY HAVE ALWAYS GIVEN DEA TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY SUPPORTED THE REQUEST FOR AN INCREASE IN PERSONNEL HERE. (THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS THAT THE PROBLEM IS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR WHERE FEARS OF DEA'S "ESPIONAGE" CAPABILITIES MAY HAVE BEEN EXPLOITED BY ELEMENTS HOSTILE TO THE US).

6. WE TAKE THE RESPONSE OF DIAZ GONZALEZ TO BE AUTHORITATIVE
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AND DO NOT BELIEVE RAISING THE ISSUE AGAIN WITH THE GOV IN THE NEAR FUTURE WOULD SERVE A USEFUL PURPOSE. IF, ON THE CONTRARY, THE DEPT CONCLUDES THAT THE INCREASE IS ESSENTIAL TO EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AMERICA AND THAT ALTERNATE ARRANGEMENTS ARE NOT POSSIBLE, A DETAILED JUSTIFICATION SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR USE BY THE AMBASSADOR WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER.
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